

A armor of God

Imagine for a moment what it would be like to be a missionary in the eighteen hundreds traveling deep into the interior of China. At that time, much of China was closed off to outsiders, and bringing the good news of Jesus Christ there meant facing opposition from local authorities, outbreaks of disease, financial hardship, and real physical danger from bandits or riots. One man who answered that call was Hudson Taylor, a British doctor turned missionary who founded the China Inland Mission to reach the unreached provinces of China.

Hudson Taylor was born in eighteen thirty two in a small town in England called Barnsley. He grew up in a Christian home, but it was not until he was seventeen years old that he truly came to know Jesus Christ as his Savior. That happened one day when his mother was away from home praying earnestly for him, and in that very moment God touched his heart and he surrendered his life completely to the Lord. From that day forward, Taylor felt a strong call from God to take the gospel message to the people of China, a vast land where millions had never heard about Jesus dying on the cross and rising again to offer forgiveness and new life.

At the age of twenty one, Taylor left everything behind and sailed for China. He arrived in the city of Shanghai in eighteen fifty four after a long and difficult sea voyage. Over the years, he faced many trials as he and his team pressed forward with the gospel into areas no other missionaries had reached. Yet in the midst of those challenges, he made a profound discovery while studying the words of Jesus in the Bible. In Mark chapter eleven verse twenty two, Jesus says, Have faith in God. Hudson realized from the original Greek that this was more than a call to generate personal faith through his own effort. Instead, it was an invitation to hold firmly to the faithfulness of God Himself. Hudson later reflected that this truth brought him incredible rest. He said it was not his faith but God's faithfulness that became his strength. He wrote, Holding His faithfulness, we may go into every province of China. Holding His faithfulness, we may face, with calm and sober but confident assurance of victory, every difficulty and danger.

This idea is rooted in the truth of Psalm ninety one verse four, which says, He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge, his faithfulness is a shield and buckler. God's faithfulness itself acts as the shield that protects His people. It is about resting in the active, reliable character of God who keeps every promise.

Hudson and his missionaries lived this out in very practical ways. They chose not to make public appeals for financial support or to go into debt. Instead, they prayed and trusted God to provide exactly what was needed. Again and

again, food, money, medicine, and other supplies arrived at just the right time, often in unexpected ways through anonymous donors or timely gifts that met the need to the penny. One example stands out clearly. There were mornings when the mission houses had no food for breakfast for the missionaries or the children in their care, yet as they gathered to thank God for His promises, provision came right on time, such as a baker delivering extra bread unprompted or a gift arriving at the door exactly when it was needed. These experiences showed them that the shield of God's faithfulness was actively at work, extinguishing the attacks of doubt, fear, and lack before they could do harm.

Today as we open God's word together, Hudson Taylor's life reminds you how to correctly put on the armor of God, especially the shield. It is about grasping and resting in God's unwavering faithfulness and standing and acting in the authority God gave you. As you hear this story, consider what it means for the battles you face right now. The same God who shielded Hudson Taylor in the interior of China stands ready to shield you with His faithfulness today. This is where our time in Scripture begins, showing you how to stand firm on the One who never fails.

Section 1

Hudson Taylor discovered that the shield in the armor of God is first and foremost about resting in the active faithfulness of God Himself. Today we are going to take that truth one step further. We are going to look at the entire armor of God and correct Paul's interpretation of it using the clear rules for determining doctrine that come straight from Scripture in Deuteronomy chapter eight verse three which says He humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord and in John chapter seven verse sixteen where Jesus says My teaching is not mine but his who sent me. These two verses give you the only safe way to build any teaching including the armor of God. You must live by every single word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord and you must receive teaching that originates from the Father Himself not from human ideas or cultural additions.

This approach will help you see what is right in Paul's words in Ephesians chapter six and what needs correction so that the full armor becomes a unified reality you wear every day. Let us turn now to God's word and discover the complete picture together.

Section II

Now let us look at how the apostle Paul wrote about the armor of God in his letter to the church in Ephesus. Paul was a pastor at heart. When he described the armor of God in Ephesians chapter six, he was not primarily giving a new doctrinal system. He was writing a pastoral letter to encourage real believers who were facing very real spiritual opposition in their daily lives. He wanted to help them stand strong in difficult times. It is not Paul's fault that over the years many have taken his words and turned them into a doctrine that goes beyond what he originally intended.

Instead we must reintroduce the armor of God according to what God has said. We go first to the words that come directly from the mouth of the Father in the Old Testament and then we see how Paul applied them pastorally in the New Testament. This way you stay true to Deuteronomy chapter eight verse three which says "...that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord" and to John chapter seven verse sixteen where Jesus says "My teaching is not mine but his who sent me." With these two rules guiding you you can now hear the armor of God exactly as the Father revealed it and then as Paul pastorally encouraged the church to wear it. Let us turn to Ephesians chapter six verses ten through eighteen and hear Paul's words again with fresh eyes. "Finally be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood but against the rulers against the authorities against the cosmic powers over this present darkness against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all to stand firm. Stand therefore having fastened on the belt of truth and having put on the breastplate of righteousness and as shoes for your feet having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one and take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God praying at all times in the Spirit with all prayer and supplication." This is the passage you have probably heard many times but today you will see it in its proper place under the Father's own rules.

Section III

Paul gets several parts of the armor of God right in this passage and you can receive those truths with confidence. First he makes it very clear that the armor is for spiritual warfare and are the primary tools for fighting Satan. He tells you to put on the whole armor of God and to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. This reminds you that the power and the protection come from God Himself. Second Paul repeatedly emphasizes standing firm. He says stand against the schemes of the devil withstand in the evil day and

having done all to stand firm. This is an existential call to be dedicated to the kingdom with all we can do, and to stand confidently in the strength that God supplies. Next Paul correctly connects several pieces of the armor to truths that God already revealed in the Old Testament. For example when he speaks of the belt of truth he draws from Isaiah chapter eleven verse five which says Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist and faithfulness the belt of his loins. When he mentions the breastplate of righteousness and the helmet of salvation he is pointing back to Isaiah chapter fifty nine verse seventeen which says He put on righteousness as a breastplate and a helmet of salvation on his head. Fourth Paul wisely leaves out the garments of vengeance that appear in the same Isaiah passage. This is correct because the Bible teaches clearly that vengeance belongs to God alone. Deuteronomy chapter thirty two verse thirty five says Vengeance is mine and recompense. Paul understood that believers are never called to wear or carry out God's vengeance. Finally Paul gives you two very strong and accurate pieces in the readiness of the gospel of peace with Isaiah 52:7 NASBS

"How lovely on the mountains Are the feet of him who brings good news, Who announces peace And brings good news of happiness...", and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God, which is in Isaiah 11:4 NASBS,

"But with righteousness He will judge the poor, And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked." These flow directly from the Father's revelation and they remain powerful and life giving for you today.

This shows that Paul was a faithful pastor pointing you to God's truth. The foundation he lays is solid. Now let us look at where the teaching needs some important correction so that you can receive the full and complete armor of God according to the Father's own rules.

However while the foundation Paul lays is solid his description of the armor is not the complete picture that God has given. The rules in Deuteronomy chapter eight verse three and John chapter seven verse sixteen require you to include every single word that comes from the mouth of the Father. This means you must go back to the full description of God's own armor in the Old Testament.

In Isaiah chapter fifty nine verse seventeen God says He put on righteousness as a breastplate and a helmet of salvation on his head he put on garments of vengeance for clothing and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak. Paul correctly leaves out the garments of vengeance because believers are never called to execute God's judgment. Vengeance belongs to God alone. But you are called to wear the cloak of zeal that comes from the same verse because the New Testament also commands you to live with this kind of passionate

commitment to God and His work.

Another important correction concerns the shield. Paul calls it the shield of faith. Yet the Father's own words in Psalm ninety one verse four say He will cover you with his pinions and under his wings you will find refuge his faithfulness is a shield and buckler. The shield is first and foremost the active faithfulness of God at work in your life. Your faith is simply the hand that takes hold of this divine protection that God already provides.

Finally Paul's picture of a Roman soldier while helpful is only an illustration. The primary and most accurate picture is God Himself as the Divine Warrior who wears this armor perfectly and now clothes you in it through Christ. These corrections return the armor fully to its proper place as the Father's complete gift to you.

Now that you see the corrections that bring the armor back to its proper place as the Father's complete gift to you it is time to understand how all the parts of the armor work together as one. The armor of God is not a list of separate pieces you put on one by one each morning like items on a checklist. Instead it is one unified reality. The Father reveals His armor as a single set of divine attributes, that He now gives you fully in Christ.

We begin with the belt of truth and faithfulness from Isaiah chapter eleven verse five which says Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist and faithfulness the belt of his loins. Here, the Hebrew word for "faithfulness", *ēmûnâh* 'ēmûnâh, does mean "truth". So it is not an incorrect statement to call it a belt of truth. This belt holds every other piece in place. Without truth and faithfulness nothing else stays secure. This security is the correct understanding of reality. Without understanding what is and is not true, nothing else works properly and you will make decisions based on an illusion.

The helmet of salvation protects the most vital part of your body. If you don't have salvation everything else is useless. And that helmet of protection is Jesus Christ Himself. The name Jesus literally means Jehovah is Salvation. No matter what happens, the helmet of salvation protects your soul and ultimate destiny in Jesus Christ. And Christ's protection of salvation is so perfect that Satan can't attack your head, he has to go for your feet. Genesis 3:15

And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel."

So no matter what happens Satan is unable to destroy you as long as you maintain the helmet of salvation. This salvation does have to be maintained.

Jesus says as much in several verses.

Matthew 5:13

"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.

Matthew 7:21 NASBS

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.

John 15:6 NASBS

If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.

These statements by Jesus shows us that we must make sure we are always securely wearing the helmet of salvation. And we maintain it by abiding in Christ.

John 15:4-7 NASBS

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

Next comes the breastplate of righteousness from Isaiah chapter fifty nine verse seventeen which says He put on righteousness as a breastplate and a helmet of salvation on his head. It is living your life righteously within God's standards that protects you from the most lethal attacks of Satan. The higher you go in God and the more productive you become for the kingdom of God the closer to the front line of attacks you get. If you are a nobody doing nothing do God, you are not a target. As you move up in God and begin to do more for God's kingdom, you move up Satan's ladder in target priorities. How many pastors and church leaders have fallen because they did not wear the breastplate of righteousness? You can do a simple search on the internet for pastors that have sexually abused members of their church and find pages and pages and pages of fallen pastors. As you grow in God and purpose you wear the breastplate of righteousness because it's your critical existential protection.

The shoes of the readiness of the gospel of peace come from Isaiah chapter

fifty two verse seven which says How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news who publishes peace who brings good news of happiness who publishes salvation who says to Zion Your God reigns. These shoes keep you moving forward in the good news that God has already made peace through the cross.

The sword of the Spirit which is the word of God draws from Isaiah chapter forty nine verse two and Isaiah chapter eleven verse four. It works with every other piece because you live by every word from the Father's mouth as Deuteronomy chapter eight verse three commands. The Word of God is your primary weapon against Satan. Jesus demonstrated this in His temptations in the wilderness.

Matthew 4:3-11 NASBS

And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.'" Then the devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, 'He WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU'; and 'ON their HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.'" Jesus said to him, "On the other hand, it is written, 'You SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.'" Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; and he said to Him, "All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'You SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.'" Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to Him.

Jesus as the Proto-Christian defeated Satan the same way any other man or woman would, with the Word of God. This is our primary weapon in the fight against Satan.

Finally the cloak of zeal from Isaiah chapter fifty nine verse seventeen wraps around the whole armor and gives you passionate energy to stand and to advance the gospel. The cloak of zeal is what we wear everyday as the cloak represents our purpose and mission to advance the Kingdom of God on earth.

The shield of God's faithfulness from Psalm ninety one verse four which says He will cover you with his pinions and under his wings you will find refuge his faithfulness is a shield and buckler covers you completely. We have already seen God's faithfulness in the life of Hudson Taylor from our opening narrative. We also see God's shield of faithfulness clearly demonstrated in the

lives of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego lived in the land of Babylon after they had been taken captive from their home in Judah. The king of Babylon, whose name was Nebuchadnezzar, set up a huge golden statue and commanded everyone in the kingdom to bow down and worship it whenever they heard the sound of music. Anyone who refused would be thrown into a blazing fiery furnace that was heated seven times hotter than normal.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow. They told king Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel chapter three verse seventeen and verse eighteen, If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up. They rested completely in the faithfulness of God. They trusted that God would keep every word He had spoken to His people.

The king became furious and ordered the three men tied up and thrown into the furnace. The flames were so hot that the soldiers who threw them in died from the heat. Yet when the king looked into the furnace he saw something astonishing. The three men were walking around unharmed in the middle of the fire, and a fourth figure who looked like a son of the gods was with them.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego walked out of the furnace without a single hair singed, without even the smell of smoke on their clothes. God had shielded them completely. It was the active faithfulness of God at work, exactly as Psalm ninety one verse four promises when it says He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge, his faithfulness is a shield and buckler. God's faithfulness became their shield, protecting them from the flaming darts of the enemy and from the king's deadly command.

This story shows you today how the shield of God's faithfulness operates. We see it operate at full efficiency when they were wearing all the other parts of the armor of God. They wore the belt of truth of who the one true God was. They were secured in the helmet of salvation that no matter what happened to them their souls were secured with God. Their walk with God was impeccable securing the breastplate of righteousness was secured on them. Their cloak of zeal for the Lord in their proclaimed dedication to God. Their proclamation was their sword of the Spirit. Their walk led to the spreading of the knowledge of the one true God. When you face your own fiery trials, you simply rest in the same God who walked with those three men in the furnace, and His faithfulness will cover you just as it covered them.

All these parts function as one because they are Christ Himself. You put on the whole armor by putting on the Lord Jesus Christ as Romans chapter thirteen verse fourteen says and by living in daily dependence on every word that comes from the Father's mouth.